

→ HI GERARD,

I would say right from the outset that if you are not sure you want to know the answer then don't ask. It's the same answer I give when someone asks me when a good time would be for him or her to come out to his or her family: If they are not sure or have reservations, I guide them to consider as many possible outcomes as they can imagine, and then to try and be unattached to all of them. Once you don't care about the outcome, then it is time. I say the same to you here.

It makes sense that you think he might be struggling with his own sexuality. I would too given that he doesn't ask you about your being gay, as well as your finding the app on his phone. However, I am not as concerned about the consequences to your parents' marriage as much as I am concerned about what it might do to your own relationship with your father. The only way this could impact your parent's marriage is if you decide to say something to your mother once you learn your father's reason for having the app. Can you imagine yourself holding onto this information no matter what your father's answer is?

What is your relationship like with him in general? It doesn't sound like you talk about deep things very much if he doesn't ask you about your lifestyle and you don't feel immediately comfortable asking him why there is a gay app on his phone (although I think most of us would not know how to deal with that situation).

HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE REASONS YOUR FATHER IS ON A GAY APP:

- He is closeted and is having promiscuous unsafe sex behind your mother's back. Will you feel obligated to tell her for her medical safety?
- Your mother and father are in a mixed-orientation marriage and have an open relationship allowing him to engage in sexual activity with other men because he is gay, bisexual or simply interested in men. Would this knowledge change the way you view your parents?
- Your father is bi-curious. Do you want to know that and wonder what he is doing with other guys? What if he wants to talk with you about it and wants you to be his confidante? That could be awkward on multiple levels.

**What if he wants to talk with you about it and wants you to be his confidante?**

● He is a sexual abuse survivor. It could be that a male perpetrator sexually traumatized your father in his childhood and looking for male sexual partners could be his way of working through the abuse. Many adult men who were sexually abused as children return to the scene of the sexual crime by acting it out with men in their adulthood. This has nothing to do with sexual orientation and everything to do with unresolved trauma. He may not even have the words to talk about this and you would have to be prepared to hear that.

● He doesn't feel like sex with men is cheating on your mother. Many straight men have sex with men believing that because it is sexual contact with men, not women, that it is not infidelity. You would need to prepare for that response and decided if you could keep that to yourself.

● He is using the app as porn. Many gay and bisexual men use the app as live porn. In other words, they get bored with written porn on the internet and even pictures and movies so they go to gay apps where they can have live chat and exchange pictures and never meet. If your father is doing this would you want to know that and would you ever believe that he isn't meeting anyone?

Sex and sexuality are incredibly complex. As you can see there can be so many reasons your father downloaded that gay app. Many gay men are going to read my response and think there is one reason only that your father has it and that is because he is a closeted gay or bisexual man. This answer is simplistic and reductionist and doesn't leave room for the many variations of male sexual fluidity.

If you are ready to hear any answer he may have about why he has this on his phone, you can begin talking to your father about your gay life. Don't wait for him to ask you questions about it, just start talking. You might even ask him why he doesn't ask you more about your gay life. Begin by opening up about your own life and telling him some confidences and things you don't generally share with others. This might give him the confidence to confide in you and start telling you some things if there are things to tell.

But don't forget, ultimately it is your dad's right to keep his sexuality private. To be fair you were on his phone and stumbled on something he has chosen not to tell you for some unknown reason. It would be best to let him come to you.



DR JOE KORT IS A LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER AND BOARD-CERTIFIED SEXOLOGIST. HE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF *10 SMART THINGS GAY MEN CAN DO TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES* [JOEKORT.COM](http://JOEKORT.COM)



## I found a gay app on my dad's mobile phone

► DEAR JOE

I think I have a good relationship with my dad, but he's never been the type of father who's particularly wanted to discuss my sexuality or relationships with me. But the other week when I went to visit my parents I was using his phone and noticed a gay dating app on it. I was completely taken aback and didn't know what to say so I didn't mention it at the time but I keep thinking about

whether I should. As far as I know my parents are happily married and maybe he was just curious about the app and wanted to know more about my lifestyle, but if he is struggling with his sexuality should I say something? I'm not sure I want to know the answer, especially if it has consequences for my parents' marriage.

GERARD, PICKERING